

Acts 2:1-21  
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"Pictures of Pentecost"

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Today is Pentecost Sunday, 50 days after the celebration of Easter, we feel the Holy Spirit blow in a powerful way which draws Jesus' followers together and inspires God's love in the world.

This morning I wanted to share a few modern-day stories which give us an idea of the power of God's Spirit to shape a better world.

The first is a story of dignity which comes from Pope Francis' book The Name of God is Mercy. He tells a story about when he was a priest in Argentina. "I remember a mother with young children, whose husband had left her. She did not have a steady job and only managed to find temporary jobs a couple of months out of the year. When there was no work, she had to prostitute herself to provide her children with food. She was humble, she came to the parish house, and we tried to help her with our charity.

I remember one day, it was during the Christmas holidays, she came with her children and asked for me. They called me and I went to greet her. She had come to thank me. I thought it was for the package of food that we had sent her. 'Did you receive it?' I asked. 'Yes, yes, thank you for that, too. But I came here today to thank you because you never stopped calling me Senora.'"

Pentecost is also about inspired speeches too; In our reading today, Peter, guided by the Holy Spirit, makes a speech that helps the crowd understand what is going on in the midst of the windy chaos. The second modern story I want to share is an example of Pentecost inspired speech, it happened last year, June 13th, a 17 year old youth with autism spoke at a High School graduation in Plano, Texas.

He began, "Unexpected. That is what I want you to remember. Unexpected. First and foremost, I would imagine that to the seniors who know who I am, it is entirely unexpected that I would be standing here giving this speech.

My name is Sef Scott and I am a student with learning differences. To be more specific, I have autism and a social communication disorder," he said. "Just by being here speaking to all of you -- me -- that alone is unexpected," Scott said.

Along with his powerful message about being and doing the unexpected, Sef also cracked a few jokes. "We all share one thing in common for sure. We all made it. And how do I know that? Well, it's kind of obvious. You're all here with me at a graduation ceremony wearing those caps and gowns. Yes, I have autism, but I am also a smart Alec. Unexpected, right?"

In the speech Scott offered some advice on how to do the unexpected. He added, "Standing in line a restaurant? When your name is called, let the people behind you go first. That simple

gesture could brighten what could have been a gloomy day. Bought tickets to an event in advance and suddenly not be able to make it? Donate your tickets," he suggested. "And pause to say 'thank you for doing a great job' to the person with special needs who bagged your groceries."

He continued, "You can sprinkle unexpected moments throughout your everyday life that can benefit those around you with very little effort on your part."

The final modern story of Pentecost is from July 2018. It's about a young African American entrepreneur who almost had his business shut down.

The Minneapolis Department of Health received a complaint about the hot dog stand that Jaequan Faulkner had set up outside his home. He called the operation "Mr. Faulkner's Old-Fashioned Hot Dogs."

But instead of closing down the operation, the agency decided to help — health inspectors even pitched in to pay for the \$87 permit.

Daniel Huff, the department's environmental health director said the agency was excited to help a young man with such drive. The official also contacted the Northside Economic Opportunity Network, which gave Jaequan some pointers on running a business and keeping his stand clean.

"I was actually kinda surprised, 'cause usually I would have one person at a time help me, but then with so many people coming at once, I'm like, wow. I realized how much people enjoy it," he said.

Jaequan said he's thinking about donating some of his earnings to charities that help people with depression.

According to the bible, Pentecost didn't end on that ancient day, it began. The wind and flame of God's Spirit inspired a whole new way of life for Jesus' disciples.

We celebrate the Holy Spirit being first given – and continually given – to the church. However, too often we leave the story there. We adorn our church in red paraments and read the story; in the end our response is basically, "That's a pretty neat story." The special effects of that first Christian Pentecost can make it easy to forget that Pentecost is a statement about the heavenly realm being manifested on earth.

We see the evidence after Peter's speech... the next verses show how Pentecost inspired the disciples to a whole new way of life: they shared communal possessions, gave to those in need, worshiped together, broke bread together with glad and generous hearts, and had goodwill toward all people. That way of life, those core values of that new community are manifestations of receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit and allowing that gift to guide us each day.

I pray we all continue to become a part of the Spirit of Pentecost, still flaming, still blowing today and tomorrow.

Amen